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ABSTRACT

Parents from rural and urban areas of Calloway County, Kentucky were surveyed regarding their children's television viewing habits. Fifteen survey questions were asked, among them whether there was a television set in the home; whether the child had a personal set; whether the family ate meals while watching television; whether television sound interfered with communication during meals; whether television commercials influenced children's material requests and the family's buying habits; whether television violence influenced children's aggressive behavior; whether some shows were forbidden to children and, if so, why; how late into the evening children were allowed to watch television; and how many hours children watched television on a school day and on a weekend. Subjects indicated which types of programs their child preferred and which three programs were the child's favorites. In general, data were analyzed in terms of percentages and with regard to grade level, sex, and type of school system to which the child belonged. Among results, data indicated that young children were forbidden to watch shows with "sexual content" and "bad language," that unsupervised television viewing increased with children's age, and that television violence was attributed to be an influence on aggressive behavior. The document contains copies of the questionnaire and the cover letter to parents. (Author/DB)

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TELEVISION VIEWING HABITS OF KINDERGARTEN, THIRD AND SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS IN A WESTERN KENTUCKY COUNTY

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INTRODUCTION

Children are, to a degree, the products of the culture in which they live and grow. They are influenced by forces within that culture. One major force today is television viewing.

Many parents and educators are concerned about the influence of TV on the developing child. They want to know what the child is "learning" from TV. How much of his/her time is used for television viewing? How is the mind of the child influenced by the barrage of commercials beamed into houses?

Teachers are asking how they can use this "force" to their advantage. Is there a way to use TV heroes as models in the classroom? Can meaningful discussions take place in the classroom regarding a popular show--whether approved or disapproved of by the teacher?

Knowledge of TV viewing habits is the first step toward understanding this awesome force called television. This research will attempt to describe television viewing habits of students enrolled in kindergarten, 3rd grade, and 6th grade in all schools in Calloway County, Kentucky.

Review of Related Literature

In recent years extensive research has been done on television viewing habits of school age children and on the impact of TV on the developing personality. A few studies conflict, but most confirm that TV is a major influence on today's youth.

Larrick (1975) reported that certain characteristics of the "children of television" were mentioned frequently by teachers in her workshops. Students have a short attention span because of acclimatization to commercials which interrupt every few minutes. Children seem to thrive on noise and confusion, becoming habituated to routine, deafening TV sounds such as laugh tracks. Many children fail to get enough sleep because they're allowed to watch late shows. Young people are more worldly in their attitudes and outlooks because of viewing shows aimed at adults. Because they see many bad models, such as politicians who lie and sex perverts, they tend to have little respect for adults. School is regarded as irrelevant because of TV's portrayal of school as an obsolete, textbook-dominated institution and because of the puns against school on Saturday morning TV. Children witness strong men winning and tend to settle differences by violence. Furthermore, Larrick suggests that the child finds everyday life dull and colorless compared to the adventure, excitement and violence seen on TV. Commercials create desire for material goods which cannot be fulfilled either because of lack of money or lack of quality in products which have been falsely advertised. These factors contribute to lowered emotional security in children. Finally, Larrick believes that there is an unfortunate pattern of family life prevailing in today's homes -- one in which

parents no longer communicate with their children, but rather, let the TV do the talking.

Quisenberry and Klasek (1977) challenge the characteristics of the "children of television" found by Larrick. They maintain that it is natural for a young child to have a short attention span and that radio and records created noise pollution before the advent of TV. In regard to many children losing sleep while watching the late show, their own research showed that only three in twenty-five fourth-graders were allowed to watch the late show (Quisenberry and Klasek, 1976). They argue that the "worldliness" children acquire from TV helps them learn more about current events and widens their vocabularies. Further, they believe that if children lose respect for adults because of bad TV models they are merely seeing the world as it really is. The fact that ~~TV~~ school is portrayed on TV as obsolete and textbook-oriented does not disturb them because they believe this portrayal could lead to improved learning experiences for children. Finally, they object to Larrick's use of the word "violent" to describe children's behavior after viewing TV. They prefer to use the term "more aggressive" and maintain that stimulation from other sources -- films, radio and music also result in more aggressive behavior in children.

Quisenberry and Klasek (1977) state that, "Some children watch television completely unsupervised, without adult guidance or interpretation." Therefore, they suggest that teachers should know what their students are watching and attempt to guide and direct their thinking if TV is to exert a positive effect on these children.

Violence on TV has been the major concern in a number of recent studies. Of special concern has been the effect of TV violence on aggressive behavior in children.

The mass media task force of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence reviewed the research and concluded that there should be a reduction in the level of televised violence, especially in cartoon programing (Murray, 1973).

During the early 70's the Surgeon General's office did extensive research on the impact of television violence. The conclusion was drawn that there is a causal relationship between violence on TV and antisocial behavior of children (Patterson & Newstadter, 1978).

Modeling of violence seen on TV is evident when the child reacts as the character did when circumstances in real life become similar to those seen on TV. Evidence of modeling TV violence was found in a study conducted in Ohio with five to nine year olds. The children in the experimental group viewed an aggressive program, "The Untouchables", while the control group viewed a sports sequence in which athletes competed in hurdle races, high jumps, etc. All the children were then given an opportunity to press a button which would either help or hurt a child in another room. The children who had viewed the aggressive program pressed the "hurt" button earlier and longer than their peers who had viewed a sports sequence. Further, young subjects seemed to show a greater willingness to "hurt" than the older subjects (Liebert & Baron, 1972).

Bankart and Anderson (1979) attempted to show that the prosocial TV program, "Sesame Street", would increase prosocial behavior such as cooperation while decreasing aggression or antisocial behavior in preschool children. "The Little Rascals" was chosen as an aggressive program. Results were that viewing prosocial TV had a strong, short-term effect on boys and girls in reducing aggressive behavior; however,

there was not a corresponding increase in prosocial behavior.

Research has demonstrated that viewers are saturated with violence. Thirteen thousand TV killings have been vicariously witnessed by the average fifteen year old (Culkin, 1977). Gerbner (1972) found that eight of every ten television plays contained violence and at the rate of nearly eight episodes per hour. The plays reviewed were generally ones created for children.

There is evidence that TV models communicate much information to young people; furthermore, that attitudes and values presented on TV frequently differ from those of family and friends.

A recent study involving 300 fourth-, sixth-, and eighth-grade students in Michigan determined the programs they watched most frequently. A team of researchers then analyzed those series which attained the highest viewing levels. The researchers were looking in particular for content relating to sexual intimacy, implied or explicit, and drug, tobacco and alcohol use. It was learned that alcohol was referred to or shown extensively -- the frequency being more than twice per hour, with most frequent showing from nine until eleven p.m. No alcohol was evident on Saturday morning TV. Tobacco and illicit drugs were seldom shown. The most frequent intimate act shown was sexual intercourse between heterosexuals, unmarried to each other -- seven times as frequent as sexual relations between husband and wife were shown. The second most frequent intimate act shown was prostitution. Approximately 3.5 incidents per hour of intimacy were shown from nine until eleven p.m., slightly less than two per hour during family hour (6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.) and no intimate acts were presented on Saturday morning. Instances of televised heterosexual intercourse, implied or explicit, and use of alcohol occurred more frequently on CBS than on ABC or NBC. "The basic

fact of intercourse as suggested by television content is that it occurs quite often, but seldom among those who are married to each other. Further, it can be bought and paid for if not obtained otherwise" (Fernandez-Collado, Greenberg, 1978).

TV advertising is effective in influencing children's attitudes and behavior toward advertised products. As little as one exposure to a commercial may influence a child's thinking (Gorn & Goldberg, 1977). Research by Goldberg and Gorn (1978) further illustrated that there are unintended consequences of TV advertising which cause children to feel disappointed and unhappy when they can't have an advertised toy. They may experience conflict with a parent over the advertised product or choose an undesirable peer for a playmate if that is the only way to experience playing with the advertised product.

In a study by Sheikh and Moleski (1977) it was demonstrated that fifth grade boys were misled more frequently than fifth grade girls by commercials with exaggerated claims. When shown a commercial for a game, boys were willing to pay about twice as much for the product as they were willing to pay after actually seeing the game. Girls, on the other hand, perceived the value of the game to be about the same whether they had seen the commercial or the product. They also estimated the cost of the toy much closer to the actual value than the boys did. It was purposed that girls are better shoppers because they have had more experience shopping with their mothers than boys.

Ads consume a large portion of TV viewing time. A child watching Saturday morning cartoons sees 24 ads an hour--mostly for snacks. At least 250,000 ads have been viewed by the time the average child is 18 years old. Some children have seen 500,000 ads by age 18 (Larrick, 1978).

Rubin (1977) investigated the viewing behaviors of children and adolescents--nine, thirteen and seventeen years old in Champaign, Illinois.

Questionnaires were answered by the subjects. The data showed a decreasing amount of time was spent watching TV after the age of nine. Nine year olds watch almost twice as much TV as 17 year olds. Previous research had shown a decrease in amount watched after the age of thirteen. Children watched more music-variety programs and less children's entertainment programs as age progressed. Comedies and adventure-drama programs were preferred across the three age groups. Only a few of the seventeen year old subjects favored news-public affairs programs and even less subjects preferred children's educational programs. Subjects were asked to respond to whether or not TV presents life as it really is. There was a steady decline from 9-17 in those who thought that it did. When asked to mark reasons for viewing TV from a check list, some motives were learned about the 13 to 17 year old age group. Most of them viewed TV "to pass time or as a habit". The second most important reason was for "relaxation", and the third reason was for "arousal/excitement". The nine year olds' most important reason for viewing was for "arousal/excitement", the second most important reason was "to pass time", and the third most important reason was "for relaxation". Viewing for "companionship" scored near the middle range for the 9 and 13 year olds but it was least important of all to the 17 year olds. Viewing "to learn" was near or at the bottom rating across the three age groups.

Lyle (1972) reported viewing habits of various groups. Girls watch more TV than boys. Black students view more than white students. High school students with higher I. Q.'s watch less TV than those who are less bright. Brighter sixth-grade students tend to watch more than less bright ones, and across all age groups, about one-quarter of all children watch more than five hours a day on school days. Few children below sixth grade level watch TV past nine p.m.

There is an impressive outlay of time spent watching TV. In most homes, the TV is on an average of more than six hours per day. The average viewer watches TV 28 hours per week. By age 18 the average student has watched TV for 15,000 hours and has been in school for only 11,000 hours. In 75 million homes there are 160 million TV sets, with ninety-eight percent of all American homes having at least one TV set (Culkin, 1977)..

The influence of TV upon our society has been so profound that it has been called the "window to the world". It's program content has been referred to as the "national curriculum". Educators can hardly ignore such a force which acts directly upon the minds of America's youth.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects for this study were parents of all kindergarten, third and sixth grade students in Calloway County, Kentucky. Subjects were from three school districts--Calloway County, Murray Independent and Eastwood Baptist. The Calloway County subjects were primarily farm residents, while the Murray Independent subjects were primarily residents of the town of Murray, Kentucky--population 14,223. The Eastwood subjects, a relatively small percent of the sample, were a mixture of town and rural families. The majority of subjects were caucasian--from lower middle to upper middle class. One thousand thirty-three families were asked to participate in this study. Seven hundred seventy (74.5%) actually participated.

Instrument

Data from parents of kindergarten, third, and sixth grade students were gathered by a survey tool developed by the researcher. It consisted of a cover letter and a two-page questionnaire with fifteen questions relating to children's television viewing habits. (Appendix A)

Procedure

Permission was given, by six principals, in February and March, 1981, to distribute the survey of television viewing habits to all kindergarten, third, and sixth grade students. In April, classroom teachers sent the surveys home with their students. The children were instructed to have

their parents fill out the questionnaire and return it to the teacher by way of their child. The researcher then picked up the surveys from the teacher.

A preliminary analysis of the data was made available to each principal before the close of the 1980-1981 school year. A more complete analysis was made in the summer of 1981. Most of the questions were analyzed in terms of percentages which were rounded off to the nearest whole number. Variables included: grade levels--kindergartern, third, and sixth; school systems--Calloway County, Murray Independent. and Eastwood Baptist; and gender. Different variables were compared with different survey questions depending on the nature of the question. Ten surveys were returned with no indication whether the student was male or female. These ten were included in the data unless the responses were being compared on the basis of gender.

RESULTS

One thousand thirty-three surveys were distributed to students to be taken home to their parents. The return rate for individual school systems is included in Table 1.

Table 1

Percent of Return for the Three School Systems Participating in the Survey

School System	Total enrolled in K, 3, & 6	Surveys returned	Percent of return

The first survey question was, "Is there a television set in your home?" Five surveys (.6%) indicated there was no TV set in the home. This did not necessarily mean that there were five families in the survey who had no TV. Two or more of the "no TV" responses may have come from the same family. The location of the "no TV" responses are showr in Table 2.

Table 2

Location of Students Who Have No TV in the Home

Calloway County	Number of Students
Kindergarten	1
3rd grade	2
6th grade	1
Murray Independent	
6th grade	1

Twenty-five percent of respondents answered "yes" to the question, "Does your child have his or her own TV set?" Table 3 indicates a steady increase in the number of students owning their own sets as age progressed from kindergarten to sixth grade.

Table 3

Percent of Students Who Own Their Own TV Set

Grade	Kindergarten	3rd	6th
%	12	25	36

The same survey question was analyzed by comparing males to females. Data showed that slightly more males (28%) than females (23%) had their own TV sets (Table 4).

Table 4

Percent of Males Compared to Females Who Had Their Own TV Set

	Males	Females
	28	23

The question was asked, "Is the TV on half the time or more when the family is together for a meal?" Seventy percent of respondents answered in the affirmative. From this group twenty-five percent stated that sound from the TV interfered with family conversation.

Three questions were asked relating to the effects of advertising on children. The first was, "Does your child frequently want to buy a product because it is advertised on television?" "Frequently" was defined as about one request per month for items such as cereal, toys, games, records, etc. Table 5 shows that kindergarten children wanted to buy advertised products almost twice as often as sixth graders. Also, the desire to buy diminished as children grew older.

Table 5

Percent of Parents Who Indicated That Their Child Frequently Wanted to Buy a Product Because It Was Advertised on Television

Grade	Kindergarten	3rd	6th
%	79	64	45

Table 6 indicates that there is no significant difference between males and females on the same survey question.

Table 6

Percent of Parents of Males Compared to Females Who Indicated That Their Child Frequently Wanted to Buy a Product Because It was Advertised on Television

	Males	Females
%	61	62

The next question was answered only if the preceeding question was answered in the affirmative. It asked, "Do you usually let your child buy the advertised product?" "Usually" was defined as half the time or more. Table 7 shows a fluctuation of permission to buy a product at the different age levels investigated. It indicates that permission was given most often to sixth graders and least often to third graders.

Table 7

Percent of Parents Who Usually Let Their Child Buy an Advertised Product

Grade	Kindergarten	3rd	6th
%	21	18	32

The third question relating to advertising asked, "If you refuse to let your child buy a product that is advertised on TV, is he or she likely to express anger or disappointment?" Table 8 shows that strong feelings were expressed about a third of the time, with kindergarten and third grade students expressing the same amount while sixth graders expressed less.

Table 8

Percent of Parents Who Indicated That Their Child Was Likely To Express Anger or Disappointment if Not Allowed to Buy An Advertised Product

Grade	Kindergarten	3rd	6th
%	38	38	24

The effect of viewing TV violence was investigated with the survey question, "If your child has watched a cartoon with violence such as 'Popeye' or 'Road Runner', is he or she likely to exibit aggressive behavior with family members or friends after viewing the program?" A very small percent of parents felt that TV violence contributed to aggressive behavior. Table 9 shows a slight decrease in influence of TV violence at third grade level when compared to kindergarten and sixth grade.

Table 9

Percent of Parents Who Indicated That Their Child Was Likely To Exibit Aggressive Behavior with Family or Friends After Viewing a Program with Violence

Grade	Kindergarten	3rd	6th
%	8	6	7

Males were compared to females on the same question and it was found that twice as many males as females demonstrated aggressive behavior after viewing a program with violence (Table 10).

Table 10

Percent of Parents of Males Compared to Females Who Indicated That Their Child Was Likely to Exibit Aggressive Behavior With Family or Friends after Viewing a Program with Violence

Grade	Male	Female
Kindergarten	11%	7%
3rd	7%	6%
6th	12%	3%

The survey question of most interest to this researcher was, "Are there some shows your child is not permitted to watch?" A majority of parents responded in the affirmative with a trend towards less scrutiny of TV shows as the child grows older (Table 11).

Table 11

Percent of Parents Who Indicated That There Were Some Shows Their Child Was Not Permitted to Watch

Grade	Kindergarten	3rd	6th
%	96	91	74

Table 12 illustrates that the TV shows of third and sixth grade girls were scrutinized slightly more than for boys.

Table 12

Percent of Parents of Males Compared to Females Who Indicated That There Were Some Shows Their Child Was Not Permitted To Watch

Grade	Males	Females
Kindergarten	96%	96%
3rd	87%	93%
6th	72%	76%
Total Sample	84%	88%

The next survey question asked parents to check the reason or reasons from a suggested list why their child could not watch certain programs. The reason most frequently checked was "sexual content", while the least frequently checked was "depressing content". "Violence" and "frightening" were checked considerably often as age increased (Table 13).

Table 13

Percent of Parents Who Checked Suggested Reasons Why Their Child Could Not Watch Certain Shows

grade	violence	depressing	frightening	bad language	sexual content
K	73%	33%	84%	77%	86%
3rd	63%	33%	74%	80%	93%
6th	52%	28%	45%	71%	92%

Reasons children could not watch certain programs were compared on the basis of gender at each grade level (Table 14).

Table 14

Percent of Parents of Males Compared to Females Who Checked Suggested Reasons Why Their Child Could Not Watch Certain Shows

grade	violence		depressing		frightening		bad language		sexual content	
	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females
k, 3, & 6	65	62	34	30	67	69	75	77	86	94

Frequency of times parents checked the different reasons was almost the same for males and females. The largest discrepancy was an eight percent difference for "sexual content".

Parents were asked, "How late is your child allowed to watch TV on a school night?" Table 15 shows the percent of students who watched until the designated hours.

Table 15

Percent of Students Who Watch TV on a School Night Until the Hours Indicated

	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
Kinder-garten	1	5	34	23	27		5	1	
3rd		.3	17	26	42	3	9		
6th			5	4	42	8	29	2	2

Calculation of the raw data revealed that ninety-one percent of the kindergarten students, eighty-six percent of the third graders and fifty-one percent of the sixth graders could watch no later than nine o'clock. Eighty-eight percent of the sixth graders could watch no

later than ten o'clock on a school night. The latest time at which the largest percent of kindergarten students could watch TV was eight p.m. Third and sixth graders' largest percentage blocks fell at nine o'clock.

The question was asked, "About how many hours a day does your child watch TV on a school day?" Results are in Table 16. A comparison was made between the Murray Independent students and the Calloway County students. For this comparison, a weighed value was computed by multiplying the frequency of responses, converting to a percent, times the hours spent watching (Table 16).

Table 16

A Comparison of Murray Independent and Calloway County Students In Regard to Hours Spent Watching TV on a School Day (numbers denote percents)

hours	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	weighed value
Kindergarten Murray Independent		12	22	25	25	16				311
Kindergarten Calloway County	1	5	27	36	14	12	1	1		296
3rd grade Murray Independent		6	31	41	17	2			1	277
3rd grade Calloway County		2	31	36	24	2	1		1	292
6th grade Murray Independent	2	8	18	36	19	2	5	2	1	290
6th grade Calloway County	1	2	23	27	24	9	7	3	1	341

The kindergartens and third grade in the two school systems showed no appreciable differences. There was a moderate amount of differences in the weighed values at sixth grade level which indicated that County sixth graders watched slightly more TV than Murray sixth graders. Most students at the three grade levels, in both school systems, watched TV about three hours a day.

Another question on the survey instructed parents to check the types of programs their child usually watched and to ask their child if they were not sure. Specific shows were mentioned as examples. The results are shown in Table 17. Students watched less "Children's Entertainment" and "Educational" programs as age increased. They watched more "Adventure Drama", "Comedy", "Sports", "Game Shows", "Daytime Serials", "Human Interest", "News", and "Movies". There was a fluctuation in the popularity of "Music Variety" and "Nature" programs.

The final survey question asked parents to list their child's three favorite TV shows and to ask their child if they were not sure which they were. For this question responses were divided between the Murray Independent and Calloway County school systems because all networks were not readily available in certain parts of Calloway County. Cablevision, which supplies all networks, is available to most Murray students. The shows "Dukes of Hazzard" and "Diff'rent Strokes" were the two most popular programs in both school systems. Tables 18 and 19 list the six most popular programs of students in the two school systems.

Table 17

Percent of Students Who Watch Different Types of Television Shows

	Children's Entertainment	Educational	Adventure-Drama	Music Variety	Comedy	Sports
Kindergarten	99	85	73	59	81	33
3rd	93	54	83	69	93	54
6th	73	22	87	62	94	67

	Game	Daytime Serials	Human Interest	News	Nature	Movies
Kindergarten	36	9	39	17	63	42
3rd	54	12	54	31	67	72
6th	65	30	60	44	62	82

Table 18

Six Favorite Shows of Calloway County Students
(Listed in Order of Preference. Brackets Indicate a Tie.)

Kindergarten Males	3rd Grade Males	6th Grade Males
1. Dukes of Hazzard	1. Dukes of Hazzard	1. Dukes of Hazzard
2. Cartoons	2. Diff'rent Strokes	2. Diff'rent Strokes
3. Sesame Street	3. BJ and the Bear	3. Sheriff Lobo
4. Buck Rogers	4. Buck Rogers	4. BJ and the Bear
5. BJ and the Bear	5. Cartoons	5. Buck Rogers
6. [Diff'rent Strokes [Incredible Hulk	6. Sheriff Lobo	6. Harper Valley

Kindergarten Females	3rd Grade Females	6th Grade Females
1. Cartoons	1. Dukes of Hazzard	1. Little House
2. Diff'rent Strokes	2. Diff'rent Strokes	2. Facts of Life
3. Little House	3. Little House	3. Diff'rent Strokes
4. Dukes of Hazzard	4. Cartoons	4. Dukes of Hazzard
5. Sesame Street	5. BJ and the Bear	5. Harper Valley
6. [BJ and the Bear [Muppet Show	6. Facts of Life	6. BJ and the Bear

Table 19

Six Favorite Shows of Murray Independent Students
(Listed in Order of Preference. Brackets Indicate a Tie)

Kindergarten Males	3rd Grade Males	6th Grade Males
1. Dukes of Hazzard	1. Dukes of Hazzard	1. Diff'rent Strokes
2. Cartoons	2. Diff'rent Strokes	2. Sports
3. That's Incredible	3. [That's Incredible, Real People, Sports]	3. Dukes of Hazzard
4. Diff'rent Strokes	4. Cartoons	4. Facts of Life
5. [Buck Rogers, Electric Company, Incredible Hulk, Muppet Show]	5. Greatest Am. Hero	5. [Jeffersons, Real People]
6. [Space Giants, Sesame Street]	6. Buck Rogers	6. That's Incredible

Kindergarten Females	3rd Grade Females	6th Grade Females
1. Cartoons	1. Diff'rent Strokes	1. Diff'rent Strokes
2. [Diff'rent Strokes, Sesame Street]	2. Dukes of Hazzard	2. Facts of Life
3. Dukes of Hazzard	3. [Cartoons, Little House]	3. Dukes of Hazzard
4. Little House	4. [Brady Brides, Facts of Life]	4. Three's Company
5. [Mister Rogers, Facts of Life, Electric Company]	5. Happy Days	5. [Little House, Happy Days]
6. [Incredible Hulk, Mandrell Sisters, Wonder Woman]	6. Those Amazing Animals	6. Jeffersons

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study. There was strong support for the assumption that there are some programs children are not allowed to watch. Data for the entire sample revealed that only fourteen percent of kindergarten, third and sixth grade students were allowed to watch any show they wished (Tables 11 and 12). This finding supports the research of Quisenberry and Klasek (1977) who state that, "Some children watch television completely unsupervised, without adult guidance or interpretation." There was, however, a tendancy for parents to exert less control on children's TV viewing as the children grew older. Only four percent of the kindergarten students were allowed to watch any TV program they wished. At sixth grade, this figure ihcreased to twenty-eight percent for males and twenty-four percent for females. Parents probably reasoned that by age eleven or twelve, children were more mature in their thinking and could make value judgements based on their own principles rather than being totally influenced by TV content. It should be noted that one hundred percent of the parents at the Eastwood Baptist school said that there were certain shows their child could not watch.

There were a number of reasons why parents objected to their child watching certain TV shows (Table 12). "Sexual Content" was checked more often than any other reason with ninety-three percent of the third grade parents and ninety-two percent of the sixth grade parents objecting for that reason. Only eighty-six percent of the kindergarten parents objected because of sexual content. This lower figure probably reflected the fact that fewer kindergarten children were interested in seeing shows with adult themes than were third or sixth grade students. Parents in this study may have observed the same problems with TV sexual content

that were found in the research of Fernandez-Collado (1978) and Greenberg (1978); namely, that TV portrayed sexual intimacy as occuring most often among heterosexuals, unmarried to each other, and that prostitution, the second most frequent intimate act shown, was acceptable.

Parents were also concerned to a significant degree about bad language on TV. They were concerned about their sons as well as their daughters. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that there is a strong church influence in the community in which the research was conducted and most parents would not condone cursing or vulgar language.

There was less concern about TV violence as children grew older--still, half the parents of sixth graders objected to their child watching certain shows with violence (Table 12). Most parents (seven percent) did not feel, however, that seeing a violent program caused their child to exhibit aggressive behavior (Table 9). This finding tends to support the conclusion of the Surgeon General (Patterson & Newstadter, 1978) that there is a causal relationship between violence on TV and antisocial behavior of children. It also tends to support the finding of Liebart and Baron (1972) that children model violent behavior. Although parents were concerned about their child viewing violence, there was little immediate evidence of its effect. Violence on TV probably effects attitudes and values in children and evidence of its effect may be so subtle as to never be detected or may surface only after a number of years.

Students in this survey were less inclined to want to buy TV advertised products as age increased. Almost twice as many kindergarten as sixth grade students requested to buy advertised products (Table 5). There was no significant difference between males and females in desire to buy (Table 6). A related study by Sheikh and Moleski (1977) demonstrated that fifth grade boys were misled more frquently than fifth

grade girls by commercials with exaggerated claims. This reasearch, therefore, did not lend support to that finding. A fluctuation was noted in the frquency that children were allowed to buy advertised products at the three age levels investigated. Third graders were allowed to buy only about half as often as sixth graders and even less than kindergarten students (Table 7). Probably more kindergarten students were allowed to buy the desired product than third graders because they desired less expensive items such as small toys or cereal as opposed to more expensive items such as bicycles or records which older children desire to buy. Sixth graders have probably learned to be more realistic in their wants, illustrated by less desire to buy, as shown in Table 5. Most likely, then, the advertised items they requested were more within their financial reach. Many sixth graders also had part time jobs such as lawn mowing or baby sitting which gave them a degree of financial independence not enjoyed by most third graders.

Table 8 demonstrated that about one-third of the children in this study expressed anger or disappointment when not allowed to buy a product. This finding supports the work of Gorn and Goldberg (1977) which illustrated that there were unintended consequences of TV advertising which cause children to feel disappointed and unhappy when they can't have an advertised toy. It is noteworthy that sixth graders did not express as much anger as kindergarten and third graders. This would seem logical in view of the facts that fewer of them requested to buy in the first place and fewer of them were denied the priviledge of buying.

Lyle (1972) reported that about one-quarter of all children watch TV more than five hours a day on school days. This research revealed that only five percent of the total sample watched TV for six or more

hours on a school day. Three hours a day was the most frequent answer given to all three grade levels when parents were asked how many hours a day their child watched TV. This can be explained, in part, because of the fact that the community from which this sample was taken is a college community with more than the average extracurricular activities for children (Table 16). Lyle's research also found that few children below sixth grade watched TV past nine p.m.--a finding that was supported in this research. Data revealed that only ten percent of the kindergarten and third graders watch TV past nine p.m. on school nights (Table 15).

Culkin (1977) stated that ninety-eight percent of all American homes had at least one TV set. This data showed that at least 99.4 percent of the families in the sample had at least one TV set with twenty-five percent of the students having his or her own set (Table 3). This figure reflects the affluence of some of the families in the community from which the sample was taken. The community has relatively few poor families and a disproportionate number of business and professional people.

Of special interest was the fact that seventy percent of the parents reported that the TV was on half the time or more when the family was together for a meal. This may be explained by the fact that the evening news comes on between 5:00 and 6:30 p.m.--meal time for many families. Often one or more members of the family must "eat and run" to an evening commitment outside the home. The choice becomes dinner with the news or dinner with no news and part of the family feeling left out of the mainstream of the world. Of the seventy percent who said that the TV was on during meal time, only twenty-five percent said that the sound from the TV interfered with conversation. This seems to indicate that many families have become conditioned to the sound of the set and either talk over the sound or do not converse.

Types of programs children watched were investigated (Table 17). As age progressed, children watched less "Children's Entertainment" and "Educational" shows, which supports findings of a study conducted by Rubin (1977). In all the other categories of shows, interest increased as age increased except for "Music Variety" and "Nature". Interest probably began declining in these two categories because sixth graders are becoming acutely aware of their particular interests and are not as open-minded about any and all kinds of entertainment. Also, eleven and twelve year olds are peer conscious and prefer to watch mainly what they consider "popular" or "in". Rubin (1977) reported that only a few of the seventeen year olds in his study favored news-public affairs programs. One can conclude that in this study more than "a few" students watched news broadcasts. At sixth grade the figure is near one-half the total. Perhaps this can be contributed to the fact that there generally is an intellectual climate in a college community.

The favorite shows of Calloway County and Murray students were very similar. The comedies, Dukes of Hazzard and Diff'rent Strokes, were favorites with all groups in the study. This supports Rubin's (1977) research which concluded that comedies were preferred among the three age groups he investigated. Also supported was Rubin's statement that students watch less children's entertainment as age progressed. Cartoons were not included as favorite shows with any of the sixth grade groups; furthermore, cartoons were toward the middle of the list with third graders, but high on the list for kindergarten students (Tables 18 and 19).

It would behoove parents and teachers of young children to take special note of the favorite programs of the children in this study. The writers recommend that parents and teachers occasionally watch the

programs their children watch. They should learn first hand the values and attitudes these shows instill in youth. There should be some discussion with children about TV themes. Commercials should be examined very critically in regard to truth and impact on children.

Parents in particular must be aware of the time their child spends in front of the "tube". Would the child be better off engaging in some physical or intellectual pursuit instead of passively watching TV?

Teachers in particular need to be aware of the TV heroes of their students. These characters can be used as valuable motivators for learning with bulletin boards, games, reading, language arts and even math.

Eighty-six percent of the parents in the survey were concerned about program content; therefore, it would be appropriate to follow up this research with a study to determine the content of the favorite programs of the children. The shows could be analyzed for the same five qualities mentioned in this survey plus ones listed by parents--(1) Unrealistic view of life, (2) Forms negative values, (3) Condones recklessness, (4) Deals with occult, (5) Depicts bad family image, (6) Has bad commercials, and (7) Reinforces stereotypes.

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APPENDIX A

Cover Letter and Questionnaire

Dear Parents,

As a graduate student in Education at Murray State, I am conducting research in television viewing habits of children in kindergarten, 3rd grade, and 6th grade throughout Calloway County.

Television has been referred to as the "window to the world". The programs offered have been called "the national curriculum". Children learn from TV, but are they learning what we want them to learn? As parents and teachers, we can best use this "force", called television, to our advantage only if we understand the viewing habits of individual children.

I would be grateful if you would take a few minutes to answer the questions on the enclosed form. After you have completed it, hand it back to your child with instructions to give it to his or her teacher. The results of this survey will be summarized in a report which will be available at your school office.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Mikulcik

Age of child_____, Grade_____, Boy_____ Girl_____

DIRECTIONS: Please put a check mark in the blank beside the correct answer.

1. yes_____ no_____ Is there a television set in your home?

2. yes_____ no_____ Does your child have his or her own TV set?

3. yes_____ no_____ Is the TV frequently on when the family is together for a meal? "Frequently" would mean half the time or more.

4. yes_____ no_____ If the answer to question 3 is "yes", does the sound from the TV interfere with family conversation?

5. yes_____ no_____ Does your child frequently want to buy a product because it is advertised on TV? "Frequently" would mean about one request per month for items such as cereal, toys, games, records, etc.

6. yes_____ no_____ If the answer to question 5 is "yes", do you usually let your child buy the advertised product? "Usually" means half the time or more.

7. yes_____ no_____ If you refuse to let your child buy a product that is advertised on TV, is he or she likely to express anger or disappointment?

8. yes_____ no_____ If your child has watched a cartoon with violence such a "Popeye" or Road Runner", is he or she likely to exibit aggressive behavior with family members or friends after viewing the program?

9. yes_____ no_____ Are there some shows your child is not permitted to watch?

10. violence_____ If the answer to question 9 is "yes", please check the reason or reasons you object to your child watching certain shows.

depressing_____

frightening_____

bad language_____

sexual content_____

other (please state)_____

11. _____ How late is your child allowed to watch TV on a school night?

12. _____ About how many hours a day does your child watch TV on a school day?

13. _____ About how many hours a day does your child watch TV during the weekend?

14. Please check the types of programs your child usually watches. Examples are given. Ask you child if you do not know.

_____ Children's Entertainment (cartoons, Captain Kangaroo, etc.)

_____ Children's Educational (Sesame Street, Mister Rogers,etc.)

_____ Adventure-Drama (Little House, Quincy, Charlie's Angels, etc.)

_____ Music-Variety (Pop! Goes the Country, Mandrell Sisters, etc.)

_____ Comedy (Jeffersons, Diff'rent Strokes, Gilligan, etc.)

_____ Game Shows (Family Feud, Password, etc.)

_____ Daytime Serials (Another World, As the World Turns, etc.)

_____ Human Interest (P. M. Magazine, 60 Minutes, That's Incredible)

_____ News (Six O'clock News, Today Show, Good Morning America)

_____ Nature shows (Wild World of Animals, Those Amazing Animals)

_____ Movies

_____ Other (please state) _____

15. Please list your child's three favorite TV shows. Ask your child if you are not sure what they are.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thank you for your cooperation. Please ask your child to return this form to his or her teacher.